

## USDA Provides Disaster Recovery Assistance for 2 Projects in Kansas

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced \$19.7 million of financial and technical assistance to help communities rebuild and repair damages caused by flooding, drought, and other natural disasters. Funds are made available through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program.

"A strong safety net is important to the long-term success of American communities," Vilsack said. "To keep America's lands safe for the public, and ensure continued strong growth in the rural economy, USDA responds to disasters across the country, ranging from record floods and droughts to tornadoes, with direct support through disaster assistance programs."

Earlier this year, NRCS distributed \$215 million to 26 states to assist in disaster recovery projects around the nation. The \$19.7 million will meet additional needs expressed by states. Congress set up EWP to respond to emergencies created by natural disasters. In this year's appropriations, Congress provided funds for projects from presidentially- or locally-declared disasters that occurred during 2011.

"Kansas received approximately \$260,000 for two EWP projects," said Eric B. Banks, State Conservationist for NRCS in Kansas. During a storm on June 2, 2011, flooding caused streambank erosion along the Wildcat Creek, Manhattan, and along the Solomon River, Beloit. The damage sustained in Manhattan was along Garden Way where apartment complexes were affected and putting at least sixty residents at risk. In Beloit, the Solomon River borders Chautauqua Park. The flooding eroded the riverbank and caused sloughing making it necessary to close the access road through the park and putting the pedestrian bridge at risk.

Disaster recovery projects are administered by NRCS in partnership with local sponsors, often municipal or county governments. NRCS pays up to 75 percent of the construction costs while the remaining 25 percent is obtained by local sponsors. When funding is dedicated to a project, contracts for construction work are awarded to local companies, spurring job creation.

Typical projects funded under the EWP Program can include removing debris clogging waterways, protecting eroded streambanks, reseeding burned or eroded areas, and in some cases, purchasing floodplain easements on eligible land. To learn more about EWP or see a list of the states and their funding allocations, visit the Web site <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/ewpp>.